

November 15, 1955

Professor H. J. Muller
Department of Zoology
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

Dear Dr. Muller:

The enclosure is a letter-to-the-editor that I wrote recently in response to a request from Miss Adams to comment on the Bulletin's current interest in genetics, and particularly on Rabinowitch's editorial on Muller at Geneva. I am sure we must have discussed the same issues before, but I had not realized how closely our views on the importance of chemical mutagenesis coincided. Not half-an-hour after I had mailed out the letter, I saw your excellent article in the Scientific American— and I thought you would be interested in my enthusiastic seconding of your discussion on this point.

Is there anything practical that can be done about this? There are obvious political implications in the enlargement of the problem of genetic hazards— especially that they should not be the unique concern of the AEC. This agency is after all primarily a technical organization devoted to the fullest possible exploitation of atomic energy; it is not surprising, in view of this primary mission, that they should act as if the genetic and other hazards were annoyances to be swept under the carpet one way or another. The watchdog over our social future should be an agency for which the public health is the primary mission... but I wish I could wholeheartedly recommend any other agency as having at present the sense of mission and the technically qualified personnel to take it over. It would not surprise me (but it may not be true) if the AEC actually would be quite willing to hand over this hot potato to someone else. But you must have been thinking much more deeply, and with much more information about these political matters; if you have any suggestions, or can advise me of anything that I can do, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

CC: Glass
930) Novick
Muller
Carnahan.
Adams
Rev.
Bowers

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